



# sample news release

## Writing an Effective News Release

When you are organizing your **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)** events, an essential tool to spread the word about your activities is a news release to distribute to local media. A news release persuades local media to broadcast or print stories about your **Recovery Month** event.

A timely, well-written news release is important. While smaller newspapers may run your release word-for-word or with minor changes to accommodate their limited space, the majority of media use it as background information to craft their own articles. Either way, the release is a fundamental mechanism for generating interest; thus, making it as powerful and complete as possible is worth the effort.

It is important to know the difference between a media advisory and a news release. An advisory is shorter and announces the event (similar to an invitation), whereas a news release provides greater detail and quotes by principal speakers and event organizers. Whether you use the template news release provided at the end of this document, on the **Recovery Month** Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov), and on the CD-ROM included in this planning toolkit, or write your own, the following will help in writing an effective news release.

Once you have written your news release, it is distributed the same way as a media advisory, by developing a media list of reporters who you want to cover the story. For information about how to develop a media list and write a media advisory, please refer to the “Media Advisory” document in this planning toolkit. It is important to distribute your news release to local media by fax or e-mail on the morning of your event. The release should be prominently placed within any packets of materials shared at the event.

Your news release should contain information about your organization’s most important and/or newsworthy activity during **Recovery Month**. Some examples of newsworthy **Recovery Month** events are:

- Honoring a local individual or organization as part of **Recovery Month**
- Planning an event to feature a local policymaker or official issuing a **Recovery Month** proclamation
- Conducting seminars or workshops showcasing a local or national celebrity speaker who is in recovery or has grown up with a family member in recovery

- Publicizing the local impact of a national news event, such as the **Recovery Month** kick-off in Washington, D.C., and highlighting the local angle your organization can offer
- Beginning a new type of service or making significant changes to existing services
- Announcing the results of a poll or study on substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery
- Launching a new public education program to address the stigma surrounding people with substance use disorders or in treatment or recovery
- Forming a special task force to address local concerns, including the impact substance use disorders have on children in affected families

If you are planning more than one newsworthy activity, distribute separate news releases for each event if they are significant enough to stand on their own. Otherwise, issue one news release along with a fact sheet that describes all of the **Recovery Month** activities taking place in your community. The news release should be detailed enough to provide reporters with everything they need to create their stories, such as answers to the questions: “who, what, where, when, and why?” Also, define all terms that may not be familiar to people outside your field.

As mentioned, please refer to the news release template at the end of this document for guidance on writing your **Recovery Month** news release, adapting it as necessary for your event. Placeholders are highlighted in bold and listed in brackets throughout the release so you can clearly identify where to insert your information. Electronic versions of this and other templates are available on the CD-ROM in this planning toolkit, as well as on the **Recovery Month** Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov).

## Tips to Remember...

When writing your news release, please keep in mind the following writing tips:

- **Stick with a traditional format** – Releases should be issued on your organization’s letterhead, or on the **Recovery Month** letterhead provided in this planning toolkit and on the CD-ROM included in this planning toolkit. If you use your own letterhead, include the logos of any other organizations you are partnering with. At the top of the page, include the name, phone number, and e-mail address of a knowledgeable contact for more information. This person needs to be readily accessible and able to respond to media questions and refer media to others who can provide additional information. The release should begin with the name of your city and the date you are disseminating the release. If the release is longer than one page, write “more” at the bottom of each page, except the last. Mark the end of the release by typing “###” centered below the last sentence.

- **Keep it short** – A **Recovery Month** news release should be no more than three pages, double-spaced (two pages is preferable) and should contain short sentences and paragraphs that are to the point.
- **Give the most important details first** – Begin with a headline (in all CAPS) that summarizes the release and captures the media’s attention right away. The first paragraph should answer the five basic questions about what you are publicizing for **Recovery Month**—who, what, where, when, and why.
- **Mention your local activities early in the release** – The local audience will be most interested in what is happening in your community during **Recovery Month**. You may wish to include local statistics about the number of people in your state or region who suffer from substance use disorders. This can be obtained from the Single-State Agency (SSA) in your state, which is listed in the SSA Directory included in the “Resources” section of this planning toolkit. Inquire about both public and private patient census information. You can also find statistical information in the **2004 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings** published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This survey is available through SAMHSA's Web site at [www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm](http://www.oas.samhsa.gov/nsduh.htm), where state substance use data reports also are available.
- **Be careful with language** – Avoid using slang, acronyms, or jargon. If necessary, give clear, concise explanations for complicated terms. Spell out all acronyms the first time they are used, with appropriate abbreviations appearing in parentheses directly after. They can be referred to by the abbreviation any time after this point.
- **Check for accuracy** – Be sure to verify all spelling, statistics, names, and titles in your **Recovery Month** release.
- **Write factually** – Opinions should be expressed in direct quotes only. The language should be similar to a typical news article you read in your local paper. When quoting an individual in your **Recovery Month** release, get his or her consent before publishing.
- **Seek placement** – Distribute your **Recovery Month** release and other materials at your event, as well as via e-mail or fax to local print, broadcast, and Internet reporters in your community on the day of the release’s date. Please use the instructions for developing a media list located in the media advisory template in this planning toolkit. Follow up by phone to reiterate the primary messages of your release and to help garner enthusiasm for your story. Try to schedule an interview with a high-ranking official of your organization to provide additional information. Check to see if any of the newspapers you contacted covered your story to document your outreach efforts.

You are encouraged to share your plans and activities for *Recovery Month* 2006 with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT), your colleagues, and the general public by posting them on the official *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov). By sharing creative executions and activities, you are helping to generate momentum, thereby furthering effective outreach that will touch the lives of millions of people.

To share your outreach efforts and community success stories during *Recovery Month*, please complete the Customer Satisfaction Form in this planning toolkit. Instructions are included on the form.

Please send samples of your organization's *Recovery Month* promotional materials to: Office of the Director, Consumer Affairs, SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, 1 Choke Cherry Road, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rockville, MD 20857.

Sample *Recovery Month* materials are available electronically on the CD-ROM in this planning toolkit. For additional *Recovery Month* materials, visit the *Recovery Month* Web site at [www.recoverymonth.gov](http://www.recoverymonth.gov) or call 1-800-662-HELP. For additional information about substance use disorders, treatment, and recovery, please visit SAMHSA's Web site at [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov).



# sample news release

[Please adapt as needed for your event.]

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact:** [Name – *Must be a person who is available to answer questions from the media*]  
[Phone Number – *Include cell phone number if the person is not always available at the office*]  
[E-mail Address]

**Sample headline:** EDUCATIONAL FORUM [OR OTHER EVENT] URGES [CITY'S] RESIDENTS  
TO OVERCOME STIGMA AGAINST PEOPLE WITH SUBSTANCE USE  
DISORDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES

### **[Number] people locally are affected by substance use disorders**

[city, state], [date] – More than [number] of [city]'s residents have a substance use disorder, yet only an estimated [number] seek out the area's treatment facilities, according to experts who spoke at a forum today to address how ongoing societal stigmas affect area residents' access to treatment. At the event, [name of a prominent local official] discussed with [list other event participants, such as clergy, members of the treatment community, etc.] how community members can better support people and affected family members seeking treatment for substance use disorders.

[Event name] was held to address the stigma and discrimination that affect those trying to access substance use disorder treatment services, as well as people in recovery. Stigma detracts from the character or reputation of a person. For many people, stigma can be a mark of disgrace and a barrier to receiving treatment. In 2004, 21.6 percent of the 1.2 million people who felt they needed treatment but did not receive it indicated it was because of reasons related to stigma.

Furthermore, 67 percent of people in a separate survey thought that stigma exists toward people in recovery from an addiction to alcohol or drugs. By raising awareness about treatment and recovery services, community members can gain a better understanding of these disorders.

"Substance use disorders can have far-reaching consequences for families and communities, and our city can reach out to support those who need our help," said [full name of local spokesperson, title, and organization]. "**Recovery Month** is an opportunity to emphasize the benefits of treatment, remind our community that treatment is effective and that recovery is possible, and address the various issues many may confront throughout recovery."

-MORE-

Sponsored by [name and phrase identifying your organization], the [event] is part of a national initiative known as **National Alcohol and Drug Addiction Recovery Month (Recovery Month)**, which is supported by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The **Recovery Month** theme for 2006 is “**Join the Voices for Recovery: Build a Stronger, Healthier Community.**” This year marks the 17<sup>th</sup> annual observance of **Recovery Month**, which celebrates people and their families in recovery from substance use disorders and promotes the need for better access to treatment services.

#### [Your organization name] Educates Community on Effective Treatment Services

[Name of event] featured [provide a few sentences detailing the event and specific points that were addressed].

To continue the momentum of **Recovery Month** activities of previous years, [your organization name] has planned additional events during this year’s festivities, including:

- [A run/walk or other fundraising event] will be held on [date/time] at [location] to raise money to fund new substance use disorder treatment programs for local residents with these disorders. Funds will also support programs for affected community members’ family and friends. The event will address how we can help fight the stigma and discrimination people may face during recovery.
- A community roundtable will take place on [date/time] at [location]. Participants will discuss [list specific treatment-related topics, such as tips on overcoming discrimination].
- Educational materials will be distributed [explain where, how, and starting when, such as mailing date or a specific date at health fairs] to help youth, affected family members, labor groups, and other community members become informed about substance use or co-occurring disorders. The materials will provide information on treatment programs available and community-based recovery support programs that are offered for affected families and friends.

#### The National Recovery Month Initiative

During **Recovery Month** each September, communities across the country join together to help people recognize that substance use disorders are treatable diseases. In 2004, 3.8 million people aged 12 or older received some kind of treatment for a substance use disorder. Participating in recovery programs for substance use disorders is as effective as receiving treatments for other chronic conditions—yet 21.15 million people needed but did not receive treatment in 2004.

Throughout September, events nationwide encourage communities, civic leaders, labor organizations, treatment and prevention organizations, community and faith-based organizations, and the recovery community to address their community’s need for treatment, overcome the barriers that prevent people from seeking help, and ensure access to local treatment facilities.

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